

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 00618

EXDIS

E.O.11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, MU, UK

SUBJECT: USE OF MASIRAH AND ONGOING US-OMANI RELATION-
SHIP

REF: STATE 008369

SUMMARY: OMANIS ACCEPT OUR PREFERENCE FOR MASIRAH AND ARE INFORMING BRITISH THAT SULTAN'S PERMISSION HAS BEEN GRANTED. JANUARY 18 ACCEPTABLE FOR DELIVERY OF MILITARY ITEMS TO OMAN AND AMBASSADOR MACKI BEING INSTRUCTED TO SIGN LETTER OF AGREEMENT BY JANUARY 15. OMANIS WANT US TO USE OMAR IN LONDON AS CHANNEL ON ALL MILITARY AND MILITARY SALES MATTERS, AND WE DO NOT SEE HOW THESE WISHES CAN BE CIRCUMVENTED. OMANIS ARE REACHING TOWARD USG, AND THIS IS BOUND TO MAKE BRITISH MORE SENSITIVE ON OMANI MATTERS THAN HERETOFORE (SEE SEPTTEL COMING). ACTION REQUESTED: DEPARTMENT'S REPLY AS TO TIMING OF PROPOSED DOD STUDY MISSION TO OMAN MENTIONED PARA 4 BELOW. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBOFF LAMBRAKIS CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER ZAWAWI TO DELIVER DEPARTMENT'S REPLY (REFTTEL) MORNING JANUARY 14. ZAWAWI HAD INVITED SULTAN'S COUNSELLOR YEHIA (PLEASE NOTE PREFERRED SPELLING) OMAR TO BE PRESENT, AND LATTER JOINED THEM AFTER A FEW MINUTES. IN INTERIM LAMBRAKIS EXPLAINED THAT REPLY BEING GIVEN TO ZAWAWI BECAUSE USG

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WISHED TO KEEP CONTACTS IN DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS. SAME

EXPLANATION MADE TO OMAR WHEN HE CAME IN. BOTH IN PRIVATE AND LATER IN OMAR'S PRESENCE, ZAWAWI DECLARED THAT USG COULD SAY TO OMAR ANYTHING IT COULD SAY TO ZAWAWI. OMAR, ZAWAWI, LONDON, AND OTHERS ARE OPERATING AS A TEAM AND KEEP EACH OTHER CLOSELY INFORMED. (COMMENT: THIS IS SUPPORTED BY LAMBRAKIS' EXPERIENCE WITH THEM ON FLIGHT TO AND FROM US.) OMAR MADE POINT THAT HE IS ON OMANI EMBASSY STAFF IN LONDON (LISTED AS COUNSELLOR FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS) AND THUS CONTACT THROUGH HIM WOULD BE IN DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS.

2. OMAR AND ZAWAWI ACCEPTED USG PREFERENCE FOR MASIRAH. ZAWAWI SAID HE WOULD INFORM HMG (THROUGH FCO) SAME EVENING THAT SULTAN HAS GRANTED PERMISSION FOR OCCASIONAL USE OF MASIRAH BY US MILITARY AIRCRAFT. ZAWAWI ALSO INDICATED HE WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT INFORM HMG OF US MILITARY EQUIPMENT SALE TO OMAN. HE AND OMAR INDICATED THAT (BRITISH) CIC OF OMANI FORCES WOULD BE INFORMED IN DUE COURSE THAT THE US EQUIPMENT IS THERE TO BE USED.

3. OMAR, IN ZAWAWI'S PRESENCE, THEN TOLD LAMBRAKIS THAT THE SULTAN HAS CHARGED HIM WITH COORDINATING THESE MILITARY MATTERS ON BEHALF OF SULTAN'S GOVERNMENT. OMAR, NOT ZAWAWI, HAD ACCOMPANIED SULTAN IN CALL ON US SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AND HAD BEEN TOLD BY SULTAN TO COORDINATE DETAILS WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY CLEMENTS. OMAR SAID ONE OF HIS JOBS IN LONDON IS TO OVERSEE MILITARY PROCUREMENT. HE THEREFORE ASKS THAT USG GO TO HIM ON ALL SUCH MATTERS (WHICH ZAWAWI CONFIRMED). OMAR SAID HE WILL KEEP ZAWAWI FULLY INFORMED. HOWEVER, THERE WERE "OTHERS" (READ BRITISH) IN OMANI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE WHO WOULD NOT BE INFORMED OF MANY MATTERS. ZAWAWI TRAVELS A GREAT DEAL AND MIGHT NOT BE IN MUSCAT TO DEAL WITH MILITARY ITEMS THAT COME UP. THESE WOULD THEN EITHER BE LEFT TO CHANCE OR GO TO PEOPLE IN MOD WHO WERE NOT AWARE OF THEM. OMAR, ON THE CONTRARY, IS IN CONTINUING CONTACT WITH ZAWAWI AND CAN HANDLE MANY MATTERS ON HIS OWN. HE SHOULD BE THE CHANNEL USED. ZAWAWI CONFIRMED ALL THIS. IN REPLY TO QUERY, BOTH MEN ASKED THAT CHANNEL NOT REPEAT NOT BE AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON. HARCORT (NOTE

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SPELLING) WAS NOT A CHANNEL BUT WILL BE INFORMED AS NEEDED.

4. ZAWAWI AND OMAR WERE INTERESTED IN DETAILS OF AIR SHIPMENT OF US MILITARY ITEMS PER PARA 2 REFTTEL. OMAR ASKED FOR THE LIST IN WRITING TO INFORM OMANI OFFICER MAJOR SALIM GHAJALI, WHO IS BEING CALLED TO LONDON FOR MILITARY MEETING OVER WHICH OMAR WILL PRESIDE IN LONDON

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JANUARY 16. GHAJALI WILL FLY BACK TO OMAN TO BE ON HAND FOR ARRIVAL OF EQUIPMENT JANUARY 18. (SUBSEQUENTLY, IN RESPONSE TO STATE 8597, LAMBRAKIS SAW OMAR WHO TELEPHONED AILING LONDON AND ZAWAWI IN HIS PRESENCE AND OBTAINED AGREEMENT THAT ZAWAWI WOULD CALL AMBASSADOR MACKI TO AUTHORIZE SIGNATURE OF LETTER OF AGREEMENT.)

5. OMAR THEN REFERRED TO US DEFENSE DEPARTMENT MISSION WHICH DEPUTY SECRETARY CLEMENTS INFORMED HIM WOULD GO TO OMAN IN FEBRUARY, STOPPING BY LONDON TO SEE OMAR FIRST. ZAWAWI AND OMAR SAID INTENTION IS TO ATTACH MAJOR GHAJALI TO GROUP IN LONDON, AS ESCORT THROUGHOUT VISIT. OMAR ASKED WE TRANSMIT OMANI PREFERENCE THIS VISIT BE IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS OF FEBRUARY RATHER THAN EARLIER. (DEPARTMENT PLEASE CONFIRM.)

6. ZAWAWI THEN GAVE US BRIEF LECTURE ON PERFIDIOUS BRITISH. HE SAID BRITISH ATTITUDE DURING COLONEL MALONEY'S FACT-FINDING VISIT TO OMAN LAST YEAR HAD BEEN ONE OF CONTINUING SUSPICION THAT THIS AMERICAN "WISE GUY" WOULD TRY TO TELL THEM HOW TO RUN THE WAR. (COMMENT: THIS IS CONTRARY TO OUR IMPRESSION OF BRITISH ATTITUDE OBTAINED FROM MALONEY HIMSELF.) ZAWAWI SAID BRITISH WERE LACKADAISICAL IN PRESSING WAR AND ONLY SOUGHT OWN PROFIT. SULTAN WANTED TO END WAR FAST. OMAR

CHIMED IN WITH ONE OF HIS LITANIES (TO WHICH LAMBRAKIS
GOT ACCUSTOMED DURING TRIP) AGAINST THE BRITISH. HE
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SAID THEY WISHED TO MONOPOLIZE MILITARY SALES AND COM-
MERCE THROUGH THEIR PRESENCE IN OMAN. OMAR SAW HIS JOB
IN LONDON AS ONE OF FENDING OFF MILITARY SALES PROPOSALS
FOR BRITISH EQUIPMENT FROM BRITISH OFFICIALS AND OFFI-
CERS IN OMAN AND GETTING BEST EQUIPMENT FOR THE PRICE
WHEREVER HE COULD FIND IT. THE US IS A FRUITFUL SOURCE.

7. COMMENT: WE ARE NO EXPERTS ON OMANI PALACE POLITICS
AND CAN UNDERSTAND DEPARTMENT'S AVERSION TO DEALING
THROUGH EXPATRIATE LIBYAN BUSINESSMAN WITH VARIETY OF
ARAB CONNECTIONS AND PROBABLY MORE THAN ONE INTELLIGENCE
TIE. ON OTHER HAND IT HAS BECOME ABUNDANTLY CLEAR TO
US THAT HE HAS HIGH STANDING WITH SULTAN (EGYPTIAN
PALACE PROTOCOL OFFICER FARGHAL WANTED TO PLACE OMAR AND
SHAKER, AS PALACE COUNSELORS, ABOVE MINISTERS ZAWAWI AND
RAJAB IN PROTOCOL ORDER DURING TRIP.) ZAWAWI AND OMAR
HAVE SPECIFICALLY ASKED THAT WE DEAL THROUGH OMAR ON
MILITARY AND MILITARY SALES MATTERS. COLONEL LONDON WILL
REMAIN IN LONDON CONVALESCING FROM SERIOUS
OPERATION AT LEAST A COUPLE OF MONTHS LONGER, AND WILL
BE IN EASY REACH OF OMAR. THUS WE SEE NO ALTERNATIVE TO
USING OMAR AS CHANNEL IN ACCORDANCE WITH OMANI GOVERNMENT
PREFERENCE. (LAMBRAKIS WILL BE HAPPY TO DISCUSS PROCE-
DURE FURTHER WITH AMBASSADOR WOLLE WHEN HE STOPS BY
LONDON. IT WOULD ALSO BE HELPFUL IF WE COULD HAVE MORE
BIOGRAPHIC DATA ON OMAR FROM USG FILES.)

8. FURTHERMORE IT IS CLEAR THAT OMANIS ARE REACHING
WITH BOTH HANDS FOR CLOSER POLITICAL AND COMMERCIAL TIES
WITH USG. WE DOUBT USG WOULD WANT TO DISCOURAGE THEM
(OR COULD DO SO WITHOUT RUNNING RISK OF OFFENDING THEM).
BRITISH CAN BE EXPECTED TO BECOME INCREASINGLY SENSITIVE
TO THIS LINE OF DEVELOPMENT. THIS IS AN ADDITIONAL
REASON FOR CLOSE COORDINATION BETWEEN EMBASSY MUSCAT AND
EMBASSY LONDON, WHERE SO MANY KEY ADVISERS TO SULTAN
EITHER RESIDE OR VISIT FREQUENTLY.

9. FCO OFFICIALS' REACTION TO MASIRAH USE AND PROVISION
OF TOW MISSILES FOLLOWS BY SEPTEL.

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